for storing [therein] a plurality of <u>expert qualifications</u>, <u>each stored expert qualification</u>

<u>corresponding to an expert of [for]</u> a plurality of experts, each <u>stored expert qualification being</u>

associated with an address corresponding to [a particular] <u>an expert of the plurality of experts;</u>

means for searching the database to identify

an expert corresponding to the requested expert qualification and
an address corresponding to the identified expert [generate a search result
containing expert qualifications which correspond to the end user request];

means for guaranteeing payment to the <u>identified</u> expert [for services rendered to the end user];

means for initiating remittance of <u>payment</u> [payments] to the <u>identified expert</u> [experts]; means for transmitting at least a portion of the end user request to the [expert] address corresponding to the identified expert [based on the search result];

means for receiving an expert answer [corresponding] <u>in response</u> to the end user request [transmitted]; and

means for/transmitting at least a portion of the expert answer to the end user.

67. (Amended) An [expert matching] apparatus for managing communications between an expert [having particular qualifications] and an end user [seeking answers to a problem], comprising:

a controller unit for receiving an end user request [generated by] <u>from</u> an end user, the controller unit having a database for storing [therein] a plurality of expert qualifications, <u>each</u> expert qualification corresponding to an expert of a plurality of experts [each expert qualification associated with an address corresponding to a particular expert];

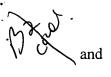
means for selecting [at least one] the end user request for evaluation [by at least one expert];

means for transmitting at least a portion of the end user request to [the] <u>an</u> expert [address] based on the end user request [selection];

means for establishing a price for an expert answer corresponding to the [selected] end user request;

means for guaranteeing payment to the expert for services rendered to the end user in response to the end user request;

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means for receiving the expert answer responsive to the end user request [transmitted];

means for transmitting the expert answer to the end user.

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113. (Amended) A [computer implemented expert matching] apparatus for managing communications between an expert [having particular qualifications] and an end user [seeking a solution to an end user request], comprising:

a controller unit for receiving an end user request [generated by] <u>from</u> an end user, the controller unit having a database for storing therein a plurality of expert qualifications, each expert qualification associated with an expert address corresponding to a particular expert;

means for classifying the end user request to determine an end user request classification; [means for searching the database to generate a search result containing expert addresses which correspond to the end user request classification];

means for searching <u>at least one external database</u> [databases] for [search results containing] <u>an expert address</u> [addresses] which <u>corresponds</u> [correspond] to the end user request classification;

means for searching at least one external database [databases] to identify
an expert corresponding to the end user request classification and
an identified expert address corresponding to the identified expert

[for search results containing/expert addresses which correspond to the end user request classification];

means for authenticating data communications between the controller unit and the expert; means for transmitting at least a portion of the end user request to the <u>identified</u> expert address [based on the search result];

means for receiving at least one expert answer responsive to the transmitted end user request; and

means for transmitting at least a portion of the expert answer to the end user.

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177. A method for managing communications between an expert and an end user, comprising the steps of:

receiving a first expert qualification corresponding to a first expert;

selecting a second expert that has a second expert qualification, the second expert qualification being higher than the first expert qualification;

transmitting the first expert qualification to the second expert; and receiving a signal from the second expert that indicates approval of the first expert qualification.

178. A method for managing communications between an expert and an end user, comprising the steps of:

receiving a first expert qualification corresponding to a first expert;

selecting a second expert that has a second expert qualification, the second expert qualification being higher than the first expert qualification;

transmitting the first expert qualification to the second expert;

receiving a signal from the second expert that indicates approval of the first expert qualification; and

incorporating identity data of the second expert into a key of the first expert.

179. A method for managing communications between an expert and an end user, comprising: receiving a first expert qualification corresponding to a first expert; submitting the first expert qualification for review by a set of experts that each have a

qualification that is higher than the first expert qualification;

receiving a signal from the set of experts that indicates approval of the first expert qualification;

receiving an end user request/from an end user;

selecting the first expert based on the end user request;

transmitting at least a portion of the end user request to the first expert;

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receiving an expert answer responsive to the end user request; the expert answer containing information about the second expert; and transmitting the expert answer to the end user.

180. The method of claim 179, further comprising: guaranteeing payment to the first expert.

181.

The method of claim 180, in which the step of guaranteeing payment comprises: requiring the end user to prepay.

182. The method of claim 180, in which the step of guaranteeing payment comprises: checking a credit card account.

183. The method of claim 182, in which the step of checking a credit card account is performed before the step of transmitting at least a portion of the end user request to the first expert.

184. The method of claim 182, further comprising:

establishing a price for the expert answer corresponding to the end user request; and

if credit available on the credit card account is less than the price of the expert answer,
requesting that the end user provide a credit card number of another credit card account.

185. A method for managing communications between an expert and an end user, comprising: receiving a first expert qualification corresponding to a first expert; selecting a second expert that has a second expert qualification, the second expert qualification being higher than the first expert qualification;

transmitting the first expert qualification to the second expert;
receiving a signal from the second expert that indicates approval of the first expert qualification;

receiving an end user request from an end user; selecting the first expert based on the end user request;